

Global Patriot

Story by Melanie Moore
Photos by Mario Sandoval



"It was a thing of beauty..."

APACHE helicopters armed with Hellfire missiles roared overhead as a field artillery battery awaited the signal to fire on a target in the Wig Mountain impact area at Dugway Proving Ground, Utah.

Crewmembers in one of the helicopters used lasers to key in on a target, an old jeep. The waiting artillerymen from the Illinois National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery, received their order and fired a 155mm Copperhead round. The jeep was destroyed.

"It was a thing of beauty. We marked the spot and they hit it," said Apache pilot CPT Kyle Bodily of the Utah National Guard's 211th Aviation Bn.

The aviators and artillerymen were taking part in Exercise Global Patriot '99, an annual joint event that brings together the Air Force and Army National Guard for two weeks of intense training at Dugway and five other installations across the United

States. Last year's exercise was much smaller than it has been in the past due to many units' deployment in support of the Kosovo mission.

SPC Eli Sheller of Moline, Ill., said Dugway was a great place to train because it's so different from what he is used to.

"We're used to training in a forest environment where you usually can't see what you're hitting," Sheller said. "We've had several days here when we've been able to shoot our rounds out and see where they're landing and see the explosion. Also, we've had a chance to shoot a lot of different types of rounds that we don't normally get to shoot."

In addition to the Illinois and Utah units, the exercise included

airmen and A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft from the Idaho Air National Guard's 190th Fighter Squadron.

"We each had our own mission and worked together to slice our time into thirds. It taught us how to work internally," said CW3 Larry Staley, a pilot in the 211th Avn. Bn. "The artillery unit starts it off by sending in a Copperhead round, which we guide with the Apache's lasers. Then the A-10s come in and blast the enemy with their 30mm cannon. Finally, we finish them up with our Hellfire missiles. This gives us a real heads-up on how real combat would be." □

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